

Montana Department of Military Affairs  
Disaster & Emergency Services Division  
**State Emergency Coordination Center**

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**Situation Report for July 23, 2007** (issued @ 1500 hrs.)

## **07 FIRES**

### **I. Background Information**

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell. The weather forecast project a continuing of the high pressure systems through August and possible into September.

See [http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire\\_behavior/fire\\_behavior.pdf](http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf) for Fire Behavior Predictions.

### **II. Current Incident Situation**

#### **Little Wolf, Ahorn, Novak Fires are being managed by Bennett's Type I team**

- **Little Wolf Fire** in the Wolf Creek drainage grew to 570 acres. Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been activated. Little Wolf is 60% contained and is threatening 20 structures. Personnel assigned: 148. Cause: Lightning
- **Ahorn Fire** on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County is at 7,350 acres. 0% Containment. Personnel Assigned: 183. The fire crossed the trigger point for the evacuation of the Benchmark area, the evacuation was implemented last night. Expect active burning today. Cause: Lightning.
- **Novak**, in Lewis and Clark County in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, is at 617 acres. Novak is 0% contained and is threatening 24 structures. Personnel assigned: 47. The fire is causing traffic impacts on I-15. Cause: Lightning

**Fool Creek** on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests in Lewis and Clark County is at 6,214 acres. Reinarz's Fire Use Management Team. Personnel assigned: 64. Cause: Lightning

**Pattengail Creek** on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. 10 miles NE of Wisdom. 3,712 acres and 27% contained. Secrest's Type 2 team. No structures threatened. Personnel assigned: 144.

Cause: Lightning.

**Rugby** on the Lewis and Clark NF is 12 miles west of Neihart. 15 structures are threatened. 210 acres with 0% containment. Angell's T2 IMT is in-briefing today and expected to assume command of the fire tomorrow. Personnel assigned: 88. Cause: Lightning

**Walk In** on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. 8 miles northwest of Ashland is 105 acres with 60% containment. Personnel assigned: 60. Cause: Lightning

### **NEW LARGE FIRES (Large fires are fires over 100 acres in size)**

**Owl** on Yellowstone NP and Gallatin NF. The Owl Fire is 400 acres and 0% contained. A Type 2 IMT has been ordered. The fire is threatening 13 structures. Personnel assigned: 10. Cause: Lightning.

## **III. Weather**

### **A Fire Weather Watch has been issued by the Great Falls NWS for the west central Montana area.**

Fire weather watch remains in effect until 9 pm MDT this evening...

Temperatures are rising through the 90's and humidities are falling on their way to readings between 10 % and 20 %. Also very isolated thunderstorms are developing over southwest Montana. These storms will become isolated to scattered in area coverage this afternoon as they spread northeast. These storms should be a mixture of wet and dry. Also strong wind gusts are possible near storms. A determination as to whether the watch will be upgraded to a red flag warning or cancelled will be made by 3 pm.

### **Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning**

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

Each NWS office creates local criteria for fire weather watches and red flag warnings. The criteria for northern Illinois and northwest Indiana include:

1. Sustained 20 foot winds of 20 mph or higher.
2. Afternoon relative humidity less than 25%.
3. 10 hour fuel moisture at 8% or less for one day.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are expected to occur or are occurring within the next 24 hours.

## **Weather Forecast**

Thunderstorms are forecast to develop over southwest and central Montana this afternoon and continue through late evening. Due to very dry conditions and the possibility of lightning starting new fires...a fire weather watch remains in effect for fire zones 117 and 118. Monsoonal moisture is going to work its way up and over most of the fire area on Tuesday for a better potential of thunderstorms. A cold front will move

down over the area from the northwest Tuesday for a shift and an increase in surface winds. The front will also help provide for an increase in thunderstorm activity. Relative humidities will continue to be low and additional fire weather highlights may need to be issued this afternoon. Wednesday will be slightly cooler. Winds will need to be monitored as they may shift and could be breezy.

#### **IV. State Declarations**

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

#### **V. Local and Tribal Declarations**

- **State of Emergency.** The following counties have declared a state of emergency:

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| Lewis and Clark | Ravalli  |
| Lake            | Granite  |
| Cascade         | Missoula |
| Beaverhead      |          |

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following counties have declared a disaster:

Teton

#### **VI. Requests for State Financial Assistance**

- N/A

#### **VII. Summary of State Resources Committed**

- One Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk module is deployed for initial attack. The Blackhawk and its module is staged in Helena.
- One UH-60 Blackhawk and module has been ordered by NRCC for deployment in Missoula for Initial attack starting 7/26/07
- July 20, 2007 at 0700 the SECC was activated and staffed to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900) The MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.
- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.